

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

May 2, 2007

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on Wednesday, May 2, 2007 at the Richmond Police Training Academy in Richmond.

Members Present

Sally Cipolla
Ruth Ann Cutright
Sharon England
A. Michael Hall
Terica Hodge
Darby Lowe
Nan McKenney
Claudette Overton
Shawn Schwertfeger

Members Not Present

Lauren Caudill
Michelle Clayton
Mindy Loiselle
Peggy O'Neill

Staff Present

Laurel Marks
Denise Hampton
Hope Hodgson
Holly Oehrlein
Melissa O'Neill

- I. Call to Order/Approval of Minutes: The regular quarterly meeting of the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, May 2, 2007 at the Richmond Police Training Academy. The meeting was called to order by A. Michael Hall at 10:10 a.m.

Mike Hall called for a motion to approve the minutes from the January meeting. Nan McKenney motioned for approval of the minutes and Shawn Schwertfeger seconded the motion. The committee unanimously approved the minutes.

- II. Citizen's Review Panel – Nan McKenney, Virginia Department of Social Services

Nan McKenney gave a brief overview of the responsibilities of Citizen's Review Panels. Virginia has three Citizen's Review Panels: CASA/CJA Advisory Committee, State Child Fatality Review Team and the Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. A handout was distributed to the committee that described the duties of Citizen's Review Panels. Committee members had

questions regarding numbers of children in foster care. These numbers will be provided at the next meeting.

Two bills that were passed during the General Assembly session were shared with the Advisory Committee that had significance for the Department of Social Services (DSS). The first was the passage of "Abraham's Bill". The second bill that passed allows DSS to obtain criminal records for any adult who lives in the home when making determinations about child safety.

DSS is in the process of updating the Guide for Mandated Reporters and requested input from Committee members. Copies were distributed for comments.

III. CASA Program Update, Melissa O'Neill, CASA Program Coordinator

Court Improvement Training: DCJS and the Court Improvement Program are working in collaboration to provide a one day conference on substantive legal issues for CASA program staff. Sharon England has agreed to provide training during one of the breakout sessions on confidentiality and information sharing. The date of the conference is June 1st.

Regulatory Monitoring: Seven programs have been scheduled to receive monitoring visits this year.

CASA Appropriation: The CASA programs received an additional \$540,000 in the budget. Each program will receive a base allocation of \$40,000 and the remaining dollars will be allocated on a per child basis.

Salary Survey: A salary survey has been completed and all programs participated.

COMET Standardization: The COMET Standardization project is moving forward. The conversion tool is being tested in five programs and to date, no problems have been reported. Training sessions will be held in July with full implementation of the Virginia COMET version anticipated by the first quarter of FY08.

- **CASA Regulation Revision Update**

The Committee was provided with copies of the "Proposed" Regulations for Court-Appointed Special Advocate Programs and the summary of the public comments received to date. Each comment was reviewed and discussed by the Committee. The most significant change offered by the Committee is the recommended inclusion of additional screening criteria to include a central registry check on volunteer applicants that have lived in another state in the past 5 years. Sharon England motioned that this recommendation be included in the proposed regulations and Claudette Overton seconded. The Committee unanimously approved the motion.

The Advisory Committee will receive the public comments during the public hearing. A tentative date was set for the public hearing during the meeting pending approval of the regulations. This tentative date is October 29th, 2007.

- **NCASAA State Standards Quality Assurance**

Each State Organization was required to complete a Self Assessment for NCASAA Standards Quality Assurance purposes. In response to our submission, DCJS must follow up in a number of areas. DCJS sought input from the Advisory Committee in the development of several documents for the completion of the NCASAA Quality Assurance process. The Committee reviewed and provided input on draft versions of a CASA specific Mission Statement, a Diversity Plan, a Public Education/Outreach Plan and a Crisis Communication Plan. These plans will be forwarded to the DCJS administration for final approval and submission to NCASAA.

IV. CJA Program Update

Ms. Oehrlein briefly took committee through things that have been done in 2007:

- 16th Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect and reported that the Grantees Meeting was a success.
- She also reported that the CJA Grant application has been submitted and that she does not anticipate any problems with it.
- Investigating Child Abuse conference took place in February with Rick Cage as the speaker. A summary of the evaluations was provided to the committee members.
- *Finding Words* Virginia – Thirty-nine people were registered for the April conference and 37 successfully completed the course. It was also reported that as of May 1st, 49 people had submitted applications for the June training. About eight applications had been received for the September 2007 training. She also reported that we have received more DVD's for the video tape library used in this training.
- Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse: Evaluations were provided to the committee from the 2006 conferences and an invitation was extended to members for the 2007 trainings (May 3 and 4 in Richmond as well as October 18 and 19 in Williamsburg.)
- Ms. Oehrlein is continuing to work with the Partnership for People with Disabilities on the "Abuse and Neglect of Children with Disabilities" training and she reported that there will be 4 trainings this year (Hopewell, Newport News, Charlottesville and Fairfax.) It was reported that 192 people have been trained so far.
- The Through A Child's Eyes National Conference will take place August 23 – 24, 2007 in Arlington.
- The committee retreat will take place November 8th and 9th. The location is to be determined.

V. New Business

The next meeting of this committee will take place on July 20, 2007.

VI. Adjourn: There being no additional sharing of information, the meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.